

FRANCO-GERMAN RELATIONS 1871-1914 n

to war, he would have done so. ** Bismarck," observed the Due Decazes, "wants us to believe that he wishes for war, but he does not wish for it himself." He was however gravely and even neurotically alarmed by the reports from his secret agents abroad. Though he did not share the bellicose views of Moltke, he desired France to know that Germany was watching her very closely, and that she would be wise to abstain from military or diplomatic measures which pointed towards a renewal of the struggle. But a policy of intimidation may easily lead to war without actually intending it. His resentment against Gortchakoff and Derby, and his fruitless request for the recall of Gontaut-Biron, showed that something had gone awry. The spectre of a coalition had appeared, and he was conscious that by playing with fire he had partially forfeited the confidence in him which Europe had begun to entertain. Everyone was asking apprehensively what he would do next. Gortchakoff acidly remarked to Lord Odo Russell that the Chancellor was suffering from nerves as a result of over-eating, over-drinking and over-working. It was certainly not his finest hour.

The conflagration in the Balkans which began soon after the war-scare of 1875 claimed Bismarck's attention for the next three years and thereby diminished the tension in the West. He continued to dread the royalist movement in France, and feared that MacMahon's clerical sympathies might lead him to attempt a *coup*. "If the French Government can permanently free itself from clericalism," he wrote to Hohenlohe in 1876, "good relations would be easy and there would be less chance of the *revanche*." He declined an invitation to take part in

the exhibition planned for 1878, despite the desire of the Emperor and the Crown Prince to accept it. His fears seemed to be confirmed by the anti-Republican demonstration of May 16, 1877, when the President dismissed the Ministry of Jules Simon and summoned the Royalist leader the Due de Broglie; and he observed that the France which stood behind Mac-Mahon would not be able to avoid war. There were two nations in France, he declared. The provinces were pacific and only wanted to work; Paris, on the other hand, loved noise and conflict, and it was Paris which determined the character of the press.